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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: APRIL 22, 2009

Summary: Reports of the "fall of a strategically important district Buner to Swat Taliban" were highlighted in all newspapers on Wednesday. In an exclusive story, the English daily, "The News," quoted the local people of the area as saying that they were "conquered and driven out of their homes and businesses by ruthless Afghan Tajiks, not Pakistani Taliban." PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif's statement that the "militants are trying to export their harsh version of Sharia to other parts of the country" received front-page coverage. The remarks by Interior Advisor Rehman Malik that "as many as 10,000 foreign militants were holed up in the tribal areas" were also highlighted. Several major dailies ran local Taliban spokesman's statement that Taliban would "welcome militants bent on battling U.S. troops and their Arab allies if they want to settle there."

Several newspapers ran editorials on the alarming situation in Swat and the controversial remarks of the TNSM chief Sufi Mohammad. The center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" observed that "striking 'deals' with an enemy that is simply buying time won't help either. Talibanisation is not just a threat, it is the reality today. Face it." The center-right national English daily "The Nation" editorialized that "it is difficult to ignore whatever Sufi Mohammad pronounces, as he heads the TNSM and signed the peace deal on Tehrik-i-Taliban's behalf. His utterances on democracy and superior courts should ring bells everywhere." The leading mass circulation Urdu daily "Jang," advised Sufi Mohammad and his aides to "refrain from issuing controversial statements." End Summary

News Stories

"Buner Falls To Swat Taliban" "Dawn" (04/22)

"Taliban militants from Swat took control of Buner on Tuesday and started patrolling bazaars, villages and towns in the district. The militants, who had sneaked into Gokand valley of Buner on April 4, were reported to have been on a looting spree for the past five days. They have robbed government and NGO offices of vehicles, computers, printers, generators, edible oil containers, and food and nutrition packets."

"Eye Witness Account Of Tajik Taking Over Buner" "The News" (04/22)

"The frightened people of Buner which has now fallen into the hands of Taliban have given horrible account of their shocking ordeal as they were conquered and driven out of their homes and businesses by ruthless Afghan Tajiks, not Pakistani Taliban."

"Nawaz Raises Alarm Over Taliban March" "Dawn" (04/22)

"Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has expressed concern over the so-called peace deal the PPP government has signed with Taliban militants in Swat and decried that they (the militants) are trying to export their harsh version of Sharia to other parts of the country. In an interview with the USA Today, Mr Sharif observed: "They are now threatening to get out of Swat and take other areas into their custody. So we've got to avoid that situation."

"10,000 Foreign Militants Holed Up In Tribal Area" "The Nation" (04/22)

"Advisor to Prime Minister on Interior Rehman Mailk Tuesday said that as many as 10,000 foreign militants holed up in tribal areas creating problems."

"Swat Taliban To Welcome Osama In Swat: Muslim" "The News" (04/22)

"The spokesman for the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, which controls the valley, told The Associated Press he would welcome militants bent on battling the US troops and their Arab allies if they want to settle there. 'Osama bin Laden can come here. Sure, like a brother they can stay anywhere they want,' TTP spokesman Muslim Khan said in a two-hour interview on Friday, his first with a foreign journalist since the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation was imposed."

"Militants Resume Armed Patrolling" "The News" (04/22)

"The situation in Swat has again become tense as the Taliban have resumed armed patrolling besides setting up checkposts and issuing warnings to security personnel to hold back."

"Taliban Warn Lawyers Against Appearing In 'Un-Islamic' Courts" "Daily Times" (04/22)

"The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) warned Shangla district lawyers on Tuesday of serious consequences if they continued to appear in un-Islamic courts (civil and district courts) from today (Wednesday). 'Lawyers are warned through this notice not to appear before civil and district courts,' a member of Shangla District Bar Association (SDBA) quoted the letter as saying."

"Nizam-e-Adl Regulation Challenged In SC" "Daily Times" (04/22)

"A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court (SC) challenging the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation 2009. The petitioner said the Nizam-e-Adl trespassed the apex court's jurisdiction and was in violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution."

"NWFP Warns Sufi Against 'Violations' Of Peace Deal" "Daily Times" (04/22)

"The NWFP government warned Tehreek Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) chief Sufi Muhammad on Tuesday against continued 'violations' of the peace deal by Taliban in Swat, urging Sufi to play a 'key role' in saving the agreement from collapse. 'Whatever is happening (in Swat and Buner districts) is an open violation of the peace deal and enforcement of sharia,' NWFP Information Minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain told Daily Times in an exclusive interview."

"Malik Warns Of Strict Action If Peace Deal Fails" "Daily Times" (04/22)

"Interior Adviser Rehman Malik on Tuesday warned of stern action if the TNSM violated the peace agreement it had made with the NWFP government. He said that the Nizam-e-Adl was invoked in 1994, under which a session judge was named Qazi. 'No one should create the ambiguity that any maulvi (cleric) will hold the charge of a judge,' he said."

"US Does Not Want To See Osama In Swat: State Dept" "Daily Times" (04/22)

"A spokesman for the U.S. government has said Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Omar should not be welcome in Swat. Asked to comment on a statement by the Taliban that the two were welcome there, the State Department spokesman said. This is not a place where they should be welcome. ... Violent extremists need to be confronted."

"Qazi To Work Under The Wing Of PHC" "The News" (04/22)

"The NWFP Advocate General, Ziaur Rahman Turangzai, on Tuesday

emphatically stated that the Peshawar High Court (PHC) would have full administrative control over the Qazi courts envisaged in the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation, 2009. 'The regulation makes no mention of the Taliban's role in the appointment of Qazis rather it is the sole prerogative of the high court to appoint a Qazi in the Malakand region,' he said."

"Next US Envoy To India May Talk About Kashmir" "Daily Times" (04/22)

"US President Barack Obama's ambassadorial pick for New Delhi, Tim Roemer, is likely to bring "the Kashmir baggage" with him, a Times of India report said on Tuesday."

"Mullen Arrives Today To Discuss Security" "Daily Times" (04/22)

"US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen will arrive here today (Wednesday) to discuss vital security issues with the Pakistani leadership. Sources said cooperation in the on-going war on terror, the Swat peace agreement, issues related to military aid to Pakistan, the situation in the Tribal Areas and matters related to intelligence-sharing would top the agenda of Mullen's meetings with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Kayani and Pakistani intelligence officials."

"UK Frees Nine Pakistanis" "Dawn" (04/22)

"British police on Tuesday released nine of the 11 mostly Pakistani men arrested earlier this month in a major anti-terror operation into the custody of immigration authorities, a spokeswoman said."

"Kasab's Lawyer Seeks Time To Prepare Case" "Dawn" (04/22)

"The lawyer for the Pakistani on trial in India over last year's Mumbai attacks on Tuesday asked for the case to be adjourned for one month to allow him to construct a proper defense."

"Hackers Break Into Pentagon Computers" "Dawn" (04/22)

"Computer spies have broken into Pentagon's \$300 billion Joint Strike Fighter project - the Defense Department's costliest weapons program ever, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday citing current and former government officials familiar with the attacks."

"Kabul Makes Progress In Talks With Taliban" "Dawn" (04/22)

"The Afghan government has asked its foreign allies to remove names of some militants from lists of wanted persons after making progress in talks with Taliban for ending the conflict in the country."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Sufi's World," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/22)
". . . Striking 'deals' with an enemy that is simply buying time won't help either. Talibanisation is not just a threat, it is the reality today. Face it. Sufi Mohammad's organization, which is sympathetic to the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, is interested less in matters of faith and more so in power in Pakistan. It is now clear that the Taliban will not stop until they have their way. And this is their prescription for Pakistan: a nation, armed with nuclear weapons, jerked back to a mediaeval age. A country where men without beards are flogged, and women killed if they choose to express themselves. That is where we are headed."

"Nation's Worries," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/22)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani's remarks that US special envoy Richard Holbrooke did not need to worry about the Swat peace accord, and that this was our country, would be welcome as far as they convey the sense that Pakistan was a sovereign state with the right to take its own decisions whether any outside power liked it or not. But since Mr. Gilani also believed that the situation in the valley was returning to normal and that he was not concerned about Maulana Sufi Muhammad's statements, it is pertinent to record one's strong reservations. It is difficult to ignore whatever Sufi Muhammad pronounces, as he heads the TNSM and signed the peace deal on

Tehrik-i-Taliban's behalf. His utterances on democracy and superior courts should ring alarm bells everywhere. . . ."

"Reflections On Swat 'Peace'," an op-ed by Ijaz Hussain in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/22)

"Prime Minister Gilani thinks that the Obama Administration is unnecessarily worried. In his opinion, it does not understand the ground realities which he claims to do. He is patently wrong and the Americans dead right . . . Incidentally, it is not just the Americans who are worried about the peace deal but lots of Pakistanis also because the Taliban, in violation of the peace deal, have refused to surrender their weapons and are reportedly inducting new recruits by forcing each family to spare one son for their terrorist militias. Their designs are undoubtedly dangerous. This represents a very scary scenario because not only would Swat become a base for their operations in Afghanistan but it would also be used as a launching pad for extending the Taliban's writ to other areas of the country."

"Defense of Swat Peace Deal and Nizam-i-Adl," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (04/22)

"United States and Britain have been urging Pakistan to use military force to beat militancy, but they themselves have neither succeeded in establishing peace in Afghanistan, nor able to overcome local resistance despite their limitless resources and military might. But they want to keep Pakistan Army engaged in tribal areas by opposing the dialogue and peace process. A majority of Pakistani people has supported the Swat Peace deal, however, Sufi Mohammad and his aides must refrain from issuing controversial statements."

"The Senate grows a spine, but. . . , " an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/22)

". . . So, the Senate may have grown a spine and may have noticed that this is certainly not the kind of Sharia that the people of Pakistan would want to see imposed on them... They have voted for the PPP, the PML-N, the ANP, the MQM and the PML-Q, and of course the BNP and the JWP and they are looking to the leadership of these parties to provide them with a coherent strategy to deal with this very clear and present danger to the country and its people. . . For the prime minister to say that Richard Holbrooke should not be worried about what is happening in Pakistan or that he (the prime minister) does not consider the views of Sufi Mohammad on democracy and the judiciary worthy of comment is to miss the point entirely. Mr Gilani, it is not just Richard Holbrooke is who worried; most Pakistanis are greatly worried about this threat. You and your government had better do something to assure them that you and your government - and the military - are serious in combating it. Brushing the threat under the carpet and pretending that it doesn't exist, or that it exists in a magnitude which is far less than what public perception makes it out to be, will not help."

"Why Shouldn't The World Be Worried," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/22)

". . . There is no way Pakistan can prevent the world from worrying about what happens inside Pakistan; there is also no way the NWFP government can prevent the rest of Pakistan from worrying about the fallout from Malakand division ... One must also say here that the world must worry especially if our politicians continue to issue head-buried-in-sand statements like 'it is not our war.' Of course, if we disavow this war, then we can't logically disallow the world from fighting it. . . Leaving all polemic aside, what if Plan A in Swat is not going to work? Only a halfwit will bet that the Taliban will not use the new law in Swat to their advantage and the people of Swat will go into vassalage simply to be spared execution. Plan B is nothing but confronting the terrorists, not alone, but with the help of the world and the help of our own people and media."

"Time Has Come To Act," an op-ed by Nasim Zehra in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/22)

"...Pakistan's state, politics and society are in grave danger. The very basis of running this country, which is the Constitution of Pakistan, and the Supreme Court, have been trashed by the main

interlocutors of the Adl Regulation. What should the government now do is the million-dollar question. Conceding power, legality, authority and even territory to these groups means more of this must follow in other areas of Pakistan. Can we allow it? How does the state, the government and the parliament retrieve a terrible situation which threatens to destroy the very frame within which this country exists? A comprehensive national strategy to deal with the threat of the militias is urgently needed. Without it the unravelling of the structures of state will ensue rapidly."

"Ignorance And Intolerance Confusing The Issues," an op-ed by Shireen M. Mazari in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/22)

". . . Unfortunately, the manner in which the state dithered over the regulation provided time for the TTP to gather strength and fill a political and legal void that prevailed in Swat in the interim period; and the provincial government's delay in implementing the regulation after its signing seemed to show a lack of political determination to be assertive once again. The "devil" so to speak lies in the perceived lack of a will on the part of the government, not the regulation itself. So it is ignorance on the part of the critics to decry the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation as it confuses different issues and only serves the cause not only of the Taliban but also of the other major threat confronting us - that is, the US, whose policies have now become part of our terrorism problem, rather than its solution. . . There are many fronts on which the state has to act and with determination but it can only do so with the support of its people - not merely US dollars. In fact the latter are a hindrance as they distort national agendas and priorities."

"Taliban To The Rescue," an op-ed by Dr Manzur Ejaz in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/22)

". . . The foreign powers obsessed with extremism and jihadi violence in Pakistan have little insight into Pakistan's real issues. They can throw a few billion dollars to prop up the state but money will only go so far: Pakistan will remain mired in lawlessness unless structural reforms are undertaken. Pakistan needs thorough land reforms and a more equitable system where the poor can also have dreams. If these measures are not taken the Taliban and the likes of them will always have a huge opening for their retrogressive agendas. If Taliban are the only force that can eliminate the traditional oppressive elite, then people will swallow their strict edicts to gain economic freedom. Most likely, Pakistan's ruling elite will not undertake system reforms even if the country is broken into fiefdoms!"

"The Joke That Is 'Do More,'" an op-ed by Mazhar Qayyum Khan in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/22)

". . . The Pakistan government finds itself in a vice-like grip, being squeezed by the US to "do more" from one side and the growing phenomenon of militancy from the other. One should expect the US to show patience and understanding of Pakistan's problems and give it solid support to fight off the pressure from the militants. . ."

"The Crisis Of Credibility US Faces" an op-ed by Dr. S.M. Rahman in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/22)

". . . In fact, the manufactured phobia made US citizens awfully paranoid and panicky, Obama should have made a clean start. But unfortunately the way he addressed Pakistanis, it was a shocking replay of Bush like statements. "Do more or else." The paltry aid will not be a free lunch and that USA would not give a "blank cheque," was shockingly disgraceful. Pakistan, had believed that it was the corner stone of US policy. Far from it. We are victims of US aggression through drones, supplemented with MOSSAD and RAW secret services.

"Torture Tactics," an editorial note in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/22)

"... The Obama administration has acted wisely; the real question though will be whether it can create the goodwill necessary to alter the kind of world we live in and build within it the mutual trust and respect that is so badly needed. The closure of the Guantanamo

Bay jail and the ban on torture techniques in use by the CIA marks a step in this direction. It is to be seen now if this foundation can be extended to create a genuinely better world by taking under policy measures which can help eradicate the injustice that is an underlying cause of the terrorism that has today created dangers that lurk in so many parts of the globe."

"Obama's View On N-Weapons," an op-ed by Haider Nizamani in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/22)

"... For South Asia, Obama's policy of taking the CTBT back to the Senate for ratification will be of significance. The Clinton administration was not happy with India's decision to remain out of the CTBT. The Senate's refusal to ratify the treaty took the sting out of Clinton's position. Pakistan readily used India's staying out as its grounds for not signing the CTBT. If Obama can secure US ratification of the CTBT he can become its crusader in South Asia. So far, Washington's practice has run counter to its preaching when it has come to the nuclear issue. Obama's Prague pronouncement can be read as an oral correction of the US nuclear policy. Instead of dismissing it as rhetoric, as sceptics are prone to doing, one can see good grounds for supporting a shift in policy and the aim to rid the world of nuclear weapons."

Feierstein